

Message Text

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FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC INFO SECDEF
WASHDC USCINCEUR CINCUSAFE USDOCOSOUTH FROM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB MILI GR

SUBJ: STRIKE AT ATHENAI AIR BASE

REF ATHENS 4237

1. SUMMARY. SEVERAL HUNDRED GREEK EMPLOYEES OF U.S. FORCES, PRIMARILY ASSIGNED TO ATHENAI AIR BASE, BEGAN A STRIKE THE MORNING OF JUNE 12 TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR SYMPATHY FOR THEIR COLLEAGUES WHO ARE ON A HUNGER STRIKE TO OBTAIN THEIR REEMPLOYMENT BY U.S. FORCES OR PLACEMENT IN JOBS BY THE GOG (REFTEL. IN ITS INITIAL STAGE THE STRIKE HAS BEEN ORDERLY AND THE BASE HAS REMAINED CALM, WITH ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES CONTINUING TO FUNCTION. ALTHOUGH CALLED A DURATION STRIKE, IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW LONG THE STRIKE WILL LAST. END SUMMARY.

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2. A STRIKE OF LOCAL GREEK EMPLOYEES OF U.S. FACILITIES IN

GREECE BEGAN AT 7 A.M. ON JUNE 12. THE STRIKE ACTION IS PRIMARILY CONFINED TO THE ATHENAI AIR BASE WHERE A MAJORITY OF THE MORE THAN 1000 LOCAL WORKERS DID NOT REPORT TO WORK. U.S. INSTALLATIONS IN CRETE REPORT NO STRIKE ACTIVITY AND OTHER U.S. INSTALLATIONS ON THE MAINLAND OF GREECE NOTE ONLY A SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN USUAL ABSENTEEISM OF 10-15 PERCENT. THE MAJORITY OF GREEKS WORKING FOR THE BASE MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR, PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS (PA&E), WERE AT THEIR JOBS WITH THE GREATER ABSENTEEISM SCORED BY THE EMPLOYEES OSTENSIBLY EMPLOYED BY THE HELLENIC OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION (THE LEGAL EMPLOYER).

3. THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE BASE IS CALM. UNDER 200 GREEKS ARE MILLING ABOUT OPPOSITE THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO ATHENAI AIR BASE WITH A FEW SIGNS WITH SLOGANS. THE HUNGER STRIKERS CARRY ON NEARBY, BUT SEPARATELY, AS THEY HAVE SINCE LAST MONDAY. THERE HAVE BEEN NO ATTEMPTS AT HARRASSMENT OR OBSTRUCTION OF THOSE ENTERING THE BASE. GREEK POLICE ARE STANDING BY TO MAINTAIN ORDER IF NECESSARY.

4. THE UNION HAS CALLED FOR A DURATION STRIKE UNTIL THOSE DISMISSED ARE REHIRED OR PLACED IN OTHER JOBS BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT MANY GREEKS REPORTED TO WORK AS USUAL AND THE RELATIVELY LOW PARTICIPATION AT THE STRIKE LINE SUGGEST IT CANNOT BE EXCLUDED THAT THE STRIKE WILL NOT LAST LONG. THE GREEK PRESS IS NOT BEING HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD, HOWEVER. FRONTPAGE STORIES ON JUNE 12 REPORTED THAT UP TO 200 ADDITIONAL BASE EMPLOYEES WOULD BE SERVED WITH DISMISSAL NOTICES, PERHAPS TODAY, WHICH IS UNTRUE; THE PRESS HAS ALSO REPORTED INCIDENTS OF EXCHANGES OF INSULTS BETWEEN AMERICANS AND GREEKS AT THE BASE, WHICH WE CANNOT CONFIRM FROM ANY RELIABLE SOURCE. BASE AUTHORITIES HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO MINIMIZE THE PROSPECT OF ANY ALTERCATION OR INCIDENT.

5. AIR BASE OFFICIALS ARE UNCLEAR AS TO THE LEGALITY OF THE PRESENT STRIKE BECAUSE A UNION-INITIATED COURT CASE FOR HIGHER WAGES, NOW IN ARBITRATION, WOULD PRECLUDE STRIKE ACTION UNTIL RESOLVED, BUT PERHAPS ONLY ON THE WAGE ISSUE.
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THE ACTIONS OF THE GOG TO MEDIATE THE PRESENT LABOR-MANAGEMENT CONFRONTATION ARE OF AN UNCERTAIN NATURE. THE STRIKE PUBLICITY CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON THE OUTSTANDING GRIEVANCES ALLEGED BY THE UNION: DESIRE FOR JOB SECURITY EITHER UNDER U.S. OR GREEK DEFENSE EMPLOYMENT AND RESENTMENT THAT U.S. CITIZENS ARE ENJOYING EMPLOYMENT AT U.S. INSTALLATIONS, ALLEGEDLY, AT THE EXPENSE OF POTENTIAL GREEK WORKERS. KUBISCH UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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